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## HER GIFT

BY TEMPLE BAILEY

Underwood hugged to himself the thought that no one knew where the lady of his heart had found the subject of her picture.

There was just a stretch of gray lake at twilight—the shadowy outline of two great steamers on the horizon—a yellow moon showing round through the mists.

He had taken her there one January afternoon so that they might look straight out upon the wide waters, and in the breathless moment that had followed he had known that the beauty of it had entered into her soul as it had entered into his, and she had said, softly, I shall always remember.

He knew that she must have gone often alone since then, so that she might have the picture for him, his Christmas gift.

It seemed to him that his pride in her must overstep all bounds. That he must say to these people who gazed on her handiwork, She is mine. See what she can do. But outwardly he preserved a calmness that half deceived Elizabeth.

You like it? she demanded, when she had a moment alone with him, while her mother poured tea at the other end of the room.

I love it, he said, and in that moment the full measure of his pride shown out.

She caught her breath. I did not want all of these people to see it, she explained, her eyes a little troubled. I wanted to send it to you before anyone else had looked at it. I think I should have liked best to have you hang it in some room where no one but you should ever go—She stopped and went on, hurriedly. But you know mother. She is so proud of it, and she would have it down for all these daws to peck at. Again her eyes were wistful.

Your mother is right, he stated with finality; the world has a right to you—to your genius—I shall keep you to it, dear, you wonderworker.

The shadow in her eyes grew deeper. But—she began, and then their solitude was broken in upon by half a dozen people who were leaving.

Letitia Vandegrift caught both of Elizabeth's hands in hers. You might be great if it wasn't for this man—her glance condemned Underwood. He will marry you next spring and there will be a genius lost to the world.

Elizabeth laughed. I am not a genius, she said. I have a little talent—but if the world loses it, what then? There are other people who can paint pictures.

There are other people who can marry, Letitia insisted. I can never forgive you for getting engaged.

Underwood smiled contentedly. I hardly dared let her announce it, he admitted. I knew that everybody would think that I was spoiling her for fame—but I am going to keep her at it.

Over Mrs. Vandegrift's head, Agatha Weatherby beamed on him. Yes, keep her at it, she said; too many women are submerged by marriage, and Elizabeth's talents are decidedly worth while.

Behind them all, Dane Arkwright spoke dogmatically, Marriage and a career are utterly incompatible—you've got to give up one or the other, Elizabeth. Personally, I should advise you to give up Underwood, and he smiled at the other man.

Underwood smiled back. You doctors are cynics. Why should not a woman develop her own individuality?

I'll give you a woman's reason because, Arkwright said lazily. When everyone had gone, Elizabeth's mother took up the same strain. I should never be willing to have Elizabeth give up her painting.

Mother! the girl cried.

And then, for the first time, the lover's ears were quickened to catch the note of pain in her voice. What is it, dear? he asked when they were alone.

She sat down opposite him in a big high-backed chair, and he noted that her fingers were tightly interlocked.

For a moment she was silent. Then she said: Would you care, if the moon picture was

She shook her head. It isn't that. But a woman who cares for her husband doesn't want fame. She wants to live in his life, in his heart, to do the housewifely things, the housekeeping things, David. Her gesture was one almost of entreaty.

But you do not need to do housewifely things, he argued, his eyes on her drooping face. Times have changed—woman's work has changed—you will have plenty of leisure.

It isn't just leisure that one must have; it is isolation—devotion to one's art—an undivided mind. And—I want to think of you, David, not of my work.

He would not have been a man if the sweetness of that confession had not conquered for a moment.

Oh, little wonder-woman, he said, don't I know what you are feeling? That perhaps I am loving the artist more than the woman. But it isn't that. You have something to give the world that I have no right to keep back from it.

And then, at last, she seemed to catch the spirit of his demand. Oh, she whispered, tremulously, perhaps with you I shall reach the heights, David.

It was not until many weeks after her wedding, however, that Elizabeth found time to paint.

And it was in the fall when David began to feel the change in her. At first it did not trouble him. He smiled at her dreaminess, and at her absent-minded response to the things that interested him. But after a time he began to miss the eagerness with which she had always met his plans for her.

Please not to day, David, was often her plea, and he would let her go without protest, but with a sense of infinite loss. He began, now, to dream of what might have been. If he had let her alone she would have fitted herself into his life—the wife-woman. That had been her choice, and he had held her away from it. Therefore he must take his punishment. He still had his belief in the sacredness of her talent, so that he would make no demand for his own selfish happiness. He had told her that she belonged to the world, and now the world was claiming her.

It was after one of their little dinners that Agatha Weatherby said, Marriage hasn't spoiled her, and Letitia Vandegrift added, Aren't you proud of her now, David?

But Dane Arkwright flashed a keen glance at his host, and said, so that no one else could hear, If she were mine, I should make her stop it. She isn't happy. Startled, Underwood studied his wife. She was very beautiful, but very pale.

That night he questioned her. Beth, how happy are you, dear?

Happy? She leaned her head against his shoulder, so that she might look up at him. Why—I don't know, David. Then she laughed. I am too busy to think. You are always too busy, he charged her, jealously.

Yes. Her restless fingers were occupied with the white flower in his buttonhole. Isn't it wonderful, David?

Wonderful? My work. I could not do it if it were not for you—I think it is your love that guides the brush pushing me. Perhaps some day I shall paint my masterpiece.

His arms loosened. Yes, some day you will paint it. But as the vision of that day weighed upon him, he cried, But I wish the moon picture had been your last.

You wish—her puzzled eyes questioned him. But I thought you wanted me to paint, David.

I did. I do. I still think I haven't any right to hide you from the world. But I am losing my wife. What are we going to do—what are we going to do?

They stared at each other with drawn faces, then Elizabeth said tensely, It seems as if I must go—I didn't feel that way at first. I had all the instincts of the primitive woman who builds the fire and cooks the food; the woman who—swings her child under the trees and waits the home coming

you shall not touch a brush. Perhaps I am selfish; I know I am illogical; but for a year I want you to be all mine, and then, if you are not happy, in a year you shall go back to it and paint your masterpiece.

David, David, in that moment of exaltation her beauty flamed like a rose, will it be right?

He bent over her and caught his breath quickly. Right or wrong, dear heart, you are going to be all mine for a year.

As the months passed by, Elizabeth's friends noticed that she was not working.

Is it David's fault? Letitia Vandegrift demanded, when she and Agatha Weatherby, having come to the Underwoods' for a week-end, sat in the rose-garden with their hostess.

Elizabeth, who had in front of her a low table heaped with roses, shook her head. We think, both of us, that I am happier when I am not striving.

Humph! Letitia shrugged her shoulders impatiently. I knew David would never stand the test. A man is always selfish. David isn't selfish, Elizabeth flared. And—and I am perfectly happy.

Perfectly? was Agatha Weatherby's quiet question.

Perfectly, she said again, but there was a note in her voice that made Letitia look at Agatha with raised eyebrows.

The trouble with you two—Agatha bent forward and picked up a red rose from among the mass of bloom—the trouble with you two is that you are both too intense. You might have painted a part of the time, not madly, as if fame must come to you in a week. And David might have let you win your laurels slowly, holding you back instead of pushing you on. But no, each must outrun the other, and so—you tired of it, and David tired of it—and there you are.

Elizabeth stuck white roses into a gray-green vase and studied the effect. Then she said, I would rather be the wife-woman than the artist-woman, Agatha.

Oh, Letitia began impatiently. But Agatha stopped her with a quick gesture.

You may paint your masterpiece yet, she said, but you will paint only when your soul longs for expression. You haven't felt that longing yet. You haven't felt that longing yet. You haven't felt that you had a message for the world. As a girl you loved beauty and you got it into your pictures. Then when David came into your life you loved him better than your art and you were willing to give it up, but because David wanted to keep you at it you persevered. But David couldn't make you great—you were striving to express yourself for him, not for humanity. You must have a message for the world, Elizabeth.

Oh, Elizabeth bent forward breathlessly, how wise you are, Agatha.

Wisdom, said Agatha Weatherby, is the gift sometimes given to women who have no husbands, no children, no great attainments. When their hair is touched with gray and wrinkles come they have much time for thinking.

Agatha, Letitia reproached her, you are not old.

But Agatha's wistful eyes contradicted. My heart feels a thousand years old, she said, when I look at Elizabeth among her roses.

That night Elizabeth tried to tell David some of the things that Agatha had said.

But he would not listen. You are not strong enough to work, and this has been such a happy year, dear heart.

So all that summer Elizabeth played in the rose garden, and when the winter came she sat by the fire and dreamed. And it was on Christmas Day that her dream came true.

Madonna, David murmured, as he knelt by the bed, and saw his little son in the curve of her arm.

Isn't it wonderful that he should have come to me on Christmas Day, David?

It is the most wonderful thing in the world, her husband murmured, still on his knees in the presence of that miracle.

I wish all women might know the joy of it. And then her eyes grew wild with sudden revelation. Oh, David, David, she breathed.

Dearest? If it should be my message—But she saw that he did not understand.

Oh, little mother-Elizabeth, she cried, you have painted the joy of the world!

And then Agatha, wise Agatha, heart-hungry Agatha Weatherby, wept because such joy was not for her.

It was just the head of her own little son that Elizabeth had put on the canvass, but the alchemy of her genius had transformed him into the spirit of celestial childhood, and in the mist behind him she had traced the faint shadow of a halo. And so wonderful was the child that no woman could gaze upon him unmoved. No selfish woman but would yearn for the touch of those tiny hands; no frivolous woman but would count her gay world well lost if such a babe might lie on her breast, no woman so hard that she would not weep when she met the gaze of those innocent eyes.

And David, when he saw that she had painted her masterpiece, cried in terror, Must I give you up to the world now, Elizabeth?

But his wife, with her child enfolded in the circle of her arm, was white with a radiance that outshone that of her honeymoon days.

No, she said quickly, I shall not paint again. I have given to the world this message of joy—and now my life is my own to live in my own way—for you and the boy, for the rest of my days, David.

### RUGS BETTER THAN CARPETS

The modern housewife has come to consider a covering for her floors (either carpet or rug) an absolute necessity the year 'round, and if these are kept in a sanitary condition, they may be deemed a benefit and an adornment to the home; otherwise, a plain wood floor is a thousand times more preferable.

Although either rugs or carpets may be managed in a way not to endanger home sanitation, they are by far the superior of carpets. Some of the keener-minded housewives have recognized this superiority and are discarding their carpets as rapidly as possible while many still cling tenaciously to the old-fashioned carpet.

The most objectionable feature about the use of carpet is the infrequency of lifting and renovating them, which is generally but twice a year. If they did not require stretching and tacking, this could of course be done more frequently, and here is where the adaptability of rugs is most apparent. They require no stretching, no tacking and whenever the housewife thinks conditions demand that the rugs be renovated, there is no putting off and dreading the job, as with carpets, for the rugs can simply be lifted, dusted, aired and replaced in the rooms in less than half the time one would consume in taking up and renovating the carpets.

But this advantage of quick handling is not the main point of excellence possessed by rugs over carpets. They lie flat on the floor; while carpets almost always have a padding between them and the floor. This filling is a veritable dust-collector, and, with the carpets above, absorbs about all the dust and other particles that settle to the floor, where the trampling of many feet works everything firmly in. If every housewife possessed the scientific instruments with which she could make an explanation of this accumulated filth collected by carpets, she would scream in horror at the seething mass of disease-germs and microbes harbored there. As they are loosened by the feet of persons passing through the carpeted rooms, these dangerous germs float in the air, and are drawn into the lungs, their poisonous effect being diffused through the entire system. Under such circumstances, it is small wonder that the death rate from lung troubles is so appalling.

Then, rugs possess other points of superiority over carpets. They are more artistic in their arrangement and appearance, with their many variations and the border effect produced by the bare floor around the edges. Carpets are much more troublesome to fit, as the amount of stretching makes it difficult to know just what size to get.

Again, rugs are much more desirable than carpets from an economical standpoint. The seams joining the several strips of carpeting for a room are soon worn until they break, or else they pull loose in stitching, fraying and ripping the carpet. In either case, there is a shabby looking carpet, a lot of tedious mending to do, or a new carpet to be purchased. But such troubles can be avoided by the simple use of rugs. Thus we see that rugs rank above carpets in these four most important points of superiority: Appearance, ease of cleaning, economy and sanitation, a combination sufficient to enlighten the most skeptical.

### FRESH AIR

We read a great deal now days about fresh air and the remarkable cure it performs, and no doubt there is considerable in it.

In the large cities it is almost impossible to get a breath that is not polluted with smoke and germ-laden dirt. No wonder then, that it is almost to be the healthy life, yet farmers must work outdoors to perform certain work, and naturally break themselves down from overwork. You possibly say they should plan to not be overworked but this cannot be done for we cannot control the weather, nor the seasons, nor the labor.

But back to the subject. Many farmers do not have enough fresh air. Tight houses are built and they shut themselves up in rooms with improper ventilation. Especially while sleeping one should have free access to fresh air. In many sections of the country you see tents set up in the yard and one or more members of the family sleep in them during the warmer months. Those who have not slept out in a tent do not know what refreshing sleep one can get, especially during the hot months.

### I Know It

A small boy was reciting in a geography class. The teacher was trying to teach him the subject of the compass. She explained: On the right is the south, on your left is the north, and in front of you is the east. Now what is behind you? The boy studied for a moment, then he said: Behind me is the back of my head.

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